

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:  
a processor having a normal execution mode and a host execution mode; ~~and~~  
a virtual machine monitor (VMM) operable in conjunction with the host  
execution mode to create at least one protected mode environment to operate guest software in a  
virtual machine[[.]], wherein responsive to a command to switch between protected modes, the  
VMM causes the processor to atomically switch between an original protected mode  
environment and a target protected mode environment[[.]]; and  
a virtual machine control structure (VMCS) to store state information for use in  
switching between the original protected mode environment and the target protected mode  
environment, the VMCS to store state information related to the original protected mode  
environment.
2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein switching between protected modes  
further includes entering a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode to enable virtual machine  
functionality.
3. (Canceled)
4. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[3]]1, wherein the virtual machine  
control structure (VMCS) further stores state information related to the target protected mode  
environment.
5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the virtual machine control structure  
(VMCS) further stores a guest entry point field to point to a command used for instructing the  
processor to exit out of the original protected mode environment and a host entry point field to

point to a command to instruct the processor to exit out of a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the VMM causes the processor to enter a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode, to exit out of the original protected mode environment, and to enter into the target protected mode environment.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the VMM causes the target protected mode environment to exit out of the virtual machine (VMX) extension mode.

8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the processor resumes operation with the target protected mode environment.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein guest software operable in a protected mode environment includes an operating system.

10. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:  
providing a normal execution mode in a processor and a host execution mode in a processor;

creating at least one protected mode environment to operate guest software in a virtual machine; ~~and~~, wherein responsive to a command to switch between protected modes, atomically switching between an original protected mode environment and a target protected mode environment[.]; and

storing state information in a virtual machine control structure (VMCS) for use in switching between the original protected mode environment and the target protected mode environment including storing state information related to the original protected mode environment.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein switching between protected modes further includes entering a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode to enable virtual machine functionality.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[12]]~~10, further comprising storing state information related to the target protected mode environment.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, further comprising:  
storing a guest entry point field to point to a command used for instructing the processor to exit out of the original protected mode environment; and  
storing a host entry point field to point to a command to instruct the processor to exit out of a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode.

15. (Original) The method of claim 10, further comprising  
entering a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode;  
exiting out of the original protected mode environment; and  
entering into the target protected mode environment.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, further comprising exiting out of the virtual machine (VMX) extension mode.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, further comprising resuming operation with the target protected mode environment.

18. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein guest software operable in a protected mode environment includes an operating system.

19. (Currently Amended) A machine-readable medium of a storage device having tangibly stored thereon instructions, which when executed by a machine, cause the machine to perform the following operations comprising:

providing a normal execution mode in a processor and a host execution mode in a processor;

creating at least one protected mode environment to operate guest software in a virtual machine; ~~and~~, wherein responsive to a command to switch between protected modes, atomically switching between an original protected mode environment and a target protected mode environment[[]]; and

storing state information in a virtual machine control structure (VMCS) for use in switching between the original protected mode environment and the target protected mode environment including storing state information related to the original protected mode environment.

20. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 19, wherein switching between protected modes further includes entering a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode to enable virtual machine functionality.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently Amended) The machine-readable medium of claim [[21]]19, further comprising storing state information related to the target protected mode environment.

23. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 22, further comprising:  
storing a guest entry point field to point to a command used for instructing the processor to exit out of the original protected mode environment; and  
storing a host entry point field to point to a command to instruct the processor to exit out of a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode.

24. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 19, further comprising entering a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode;

exiting out of the original protected mode environment; and  
entering into the target protected mode environment.

25. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 24, further comprising exiting out of the virtual machine (VMX) extension mode.

26. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 25, further comprising resuming operation with the target protected mode environment.

27. (Original) The machine-readable medium of claim 19, wherein guest software operable in a protected mode environment includes an operating system.

28. (Currently Amended) A system comprising:  
a processor including virtual machine extension (VMX) instruction support, the processor further having a normal execution mode and a host execution mode; ~~and~~  
a virtual machine monitor (VMM) operable in conjunction with the host execution mode to create at least one protected mode environment to operate guest software in a protected memory area[[:]], wherein responsive to a command to switch between protected modes, the VMM causes the processor to atomically switch between an original protected mode environment and a target protected mode environment[[:]]; and  
a virtual machine control structure (VMCS) to store state information for use in switching between the original protected mode environment and the target protected mode environment, the VMCS to store state information related to the original protected mode environment.

29. (Original) The system of claim 28, wherein switching between protected modes further includes entering a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode to enable virtual machine functionality.

30. (Canceled)

31. (Currently Amended) The system of claim ~~[[30]]~~28, wherein the virtual machine control structure (VMCS) further stores state information related to the target protected mode environment.

32. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein the virtual machine control structure (VMCS) further stores a guest entry point field to point to a command used for instructing the processor to exit out of the original protected mode environment and a host entry point field to point to a command to instruct the processor to exit out of a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode.

33. (Original) The system of claim 28, wherein the VMM causes the processor to enter a virtual machine execution (VMX) mode, to exit out of the original protected mode environment, and to enter into the target protected mode environment.

34. (Original) The system of claim 33, wherein the VMM causes the target protected mode environment to exit out of the virtual machine (VMX) extension mode.

35. (Original) The system of claim 34, wherein the processor resumes operation with the target protected mode environment.

36. (Original) The system of claim 28, wherein guest software operable in a protected mode environment includes an operating system.